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ABSTRACT

It is important to understand the ways in which zoos can serve as a resource in the development of classroom teachers, parents, and community organization staff members as environmental educators. This project consists of three distinct, but related investigations of zoo use by different groups of educators. The project methodology included separately designed, targeted telephone surveys of each educator population to get a broad-based picture of educator opinions about: (1) their use of zoo environmental education resources; (2) environmental education partnerships in youth and zoos; and (3) programs to enhance their capacity as environmental educators. The project methodology also included separately conducted focus group discussions with each of the educator populations. The major project finding was that the three groups of educators all use zoos as part of child development. However, the use of zoos as an educational resource by one type of educator is usually not coordinated with the use of zoos by other types of educators. At present, zoos offer formal programs which can meet many of the needs expressed by classroom teachers. Existing zoo programs are less adapted to meeting a need for informal support of educators such as parents and community organization professional staff. (LZ)

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